

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-3 (canceled)

Claim 4 (currently amended): ~~The apparatus of claim 1,~~ An apparatus for filtering a natural gas stream, the apparatus comprising:

a closed vessel having a length and an initially open interior;

a partition disposed within the vessel interior, the partition having a planar inner and planar outer side, respectively, dividing the vessel interior into a first stage and a second stage;

at least one opening in the partition;

an inlet port in fluid communication with the first stage;

an outlet port in fluid communication with the second stage;

at least one tubular filter element, the tubular filter element being disposed within the vessel to sealingly extend from within the first stage, the filter element having a locking end, a tubular length, and a handle end;

a mounting structure located on a selected planar side of the partition;

a rotational mounting means on the locking end of the at least one filter element which cooperates with the mounting structure of the vessel for rotationally locking the filter element with respect to the partition upon rotational movement of the filter element from the handle end; and

wherein the generally cylindrical locking end of the filter elements joins the tubular length of the filter elements at a neck region of each filter element, the neck region forming a region of increased external diameter along the tubular length of the filter element, and wherein a seal means is located at the neck region for sealing against the partition when the filter element is locked in position.

Claim 5 (original): The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the seal means is a chevron-shaped seal.

Claim 6 (original): The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the seal means is an O-ring seal.

Claim 7 (canceled)

Claim 8 (currently amended): ~~The apparatus of claim 7;~~ An apparatus for filtering a natural gas stream, the apparatus comprising:

a closed vessel having a length and an initially open interior;

a partition disposed within the vessel interior, the partition having a planar inner and planar outer side, respectively, dividing the vessel interior into a first stage and a second stage;

at least one opening in the partition;

an inlet port in fluid communication with the first stage;

an outlet port in fluid communication with the second stage;

at least one tubular filter element, the tubular filter element being disposed within the vessel to sealingly extend from within the first stage, the filter element having a locking end, a tubular length, and a handle end;

a mounting structure located on a selected planar side of the partition;

a rotational mounting means on the locking end of the at least one filter element which cooperates with the mounting structure of the vessel for rotationally locking the filter element with respect to the partition upon rotational movement of the filter element from the handle end;

wherein each of the filter elements has a generally cylindrical locking end and wherein the mounting means on the locking end of the filter elements is a slot provided in the cylindrical locking end;

wherein the mounting means on the locking end of the filter elements is a J-slot;

wherein the mounting structure located on a selected side of the partition is a post which is aligned with respect to a partition opening and wherein the J-slot receives and engages the post as the filter element is rotated from the handle end; and

wherein the post is supported between opposing side flanges, the side flanges being arranged generally perpendicular to the selected planar face of the partition, whereby the post extends in a plane generally parallel to the plane of the selected planar face of the partition.

Claim 9 (canceled)

Claim 10 (currently amended): ~~The apparatus of claim 9;~~ An apparatus for filtering a natural gas stream, the apparatus comprising:

a closed vessel having a length and an initially open interior;

a partition disposed within the vessel interior, the partition having a planar inner and planar outer side, respectively, dividing the vessel interior into a first stage and a second stage;

at least one opening in the partition;

an inlet port in fluid communication with the first stage;

an outlet port in fluid communication with the second stage;

at least one tubular filter element, the tubular filter element being disposed within the vessel to sealingly extend from within the first stage, the filter element having a locking end, a tubular length, and a handle end;

a mounting structure located on a selected planar side of the partition;

a rotational mounting means on the locking end of the at least one filter element which cooperates with the mounting structure of the vessel for rotationally locking the filter element with respect to the partition upon rotational movement of the filter element from the handle end;

wherein each of the filter elements has a generally cylindrical locking end and wherein the mounting means on the locking end of the filter elements is a slot provided in the cylindrical locking end;

wherein the mounting means on the locking end of the filter elements is a J-slot;

wherein the mounting structure located on a selected side of the partition is a pair of spaced apart post elements which are aligned with respect to a partition opening and wherein the J-slot receives and engages the post elements as the filter element is rotated from the handle end; and

wherein the post elements are supported between opposing side flanges, the side flanges being arranged generally perpendicular to the selected planar face of the partition, whereby the spaced apart post elements extend in a plane generally parallel to the plane of the selected planar face of the partition.

Claim 11-16 (canceled)

Claim 17 (currently amended): ~~The filter element of claim 15,~~ A tubular filter element for filtering a natural gas stream passing through a filter vessel, the filter element comprising:

a body having a locking end, a tubular length and a handle end;

the tubular length of the filter body comprising a filter wall having a plurality of overlapped layers of non-woven fabric strips, the filter body also having a hollow core;

a rotational mounting means on the locking end of the filter element which cooperates with a mating mounting structure provided within the filter vessel for rotationally locking the filter element with respect to the mounting structure upon rotational movement of the filter element from the handle end;

wherein the locking end of the filter element is a generally cylindrical locking end and wherein the mounting means on the locking end of the filter element is a slot provided in the cylindrical locking end; and

wherein the generally cylindrical locking end of the filter elements join element joins the

tubular length of the filter ~~elements~~ element at a neck region of each filter element, the neck region forming a region of increased external diameter along the tubular length of the filter element, and wherein a seal means is located at the neck region for sealing against the mounting structure when the filter element is locked in position.

Claim 18 (original): The filter element of claim 17, wherein the seal means is a chevron-shaped seal.

Claim 19 (original): The filter element of claim 17, wherein the seal means is an O-ring seal.

Claims 20-22 (canceled)

Claim 23 (currently amended): ~~The method of claim 21,~~ A method of filtering solids from a natural gas stream, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a filter vessel having a first stage and a second stage, the first stage being separated from the second stage by a partition having at least one opening;

installing at least one replaceable filter element within the filter vessel, the filter element being sealed within the opening in the partition, the filter element having a locking end, a tubular length, and a handle end;

providing a mounting structure located on a selected planar side of the partition;

providing a rotational mounting means on the locking end of at least selected filter elements which cooperates with the mounting structure of the vessel for rotationally locking the filter element with respect to the mounting structure upon rotational movement of the filter element from the handle end;

filtering solids from the gas stream in the first stage; and

passing the gas stream from the filter element to the second stage;

wherein the filter elements are provided with generally cylindrical locking ends and wherein the mounting means on the locking end of the filter elements is a slot provided in the cylindrical locking end; and

wherein the generally cylindrical locking end of the filter elements join the tubular length of the filter elements at a neck region of each filter element, the neck region forming a region of increased external diameter along the tubular length of the filter element, and wherein a seal means is located at the neck region for sealing against the partition when the filter element is locked in position.

Claim 24 (original): The method of claim 23, wherein the seal means is a chevron-shaped seal.

Claim 25 (original): The method of claim 23, wherein the seal means is an O-ring seal.

Claims 26-31 (canceled):

Claim 32 (currently amended): ~~The apparatus of claim 30;~~ An apparatus for filtering a natural gas stream, the apparatus comprising:

a closed vessel having a length and an initially open interior;

a partition disposed within the vessel interior, the partition having a planar inner and planar outer side, respectively, dividing the vessel interior into a first stage and a second stage;

an inlet port in fluid communication with the first stage;

an outlet port in fluid communication with the second stage;

at least one opening in the partition sized to receive a locking end of a tubular filter element for supporting the filter element within the vessel;

a mounting structure located on a selected planar side of the partition, the mounting structure comprising at least one post supported by side flanges so that the post lies in a plane which extends at least partly across the opening in the partition; and

wherein the post is supported between opposing side flanges, the side flanges being arranged generally perpendicular to the selected planar face of the partition, whereby the post extends in a plane generally parallel to the plane of the selected planar face of the partition.

Claim 33 (canceled)

Claim 34 (currently amended): ~~The apparatus of claim 33;~~ An apparatus for filtering a natural gas stream, the apparatus comprising:

a closed vessel having a length and an initially open interior;

a partition disposed within the vessel interior, the partition having a planar inner and planar outer side, respectively, dividing the vessel interior into a first stage and a second stage;

an inlet port in fluid communication with the first stage;

an outlet port in fluid communication with the second stage;

at least one opening in the partition sized to receive a locking end of a tubular filter element for supporting the filter element within the vessel;

a mounting structure located on a selected planar side of the partition, the mounting structure comprising at least one post supported by side flanges so that the post lies in a plane which extends at least partly across the opening in the partition;

wherein the mounting structure located on a selected side of the partition is a pair of spaced

apart post elements which are aligned with respect to a partition opening; and

wherein the post elements are supported between opposing side flanges, the side flanges being arranged generally perpendicular to the selected planar face of the partition, whereby the spaced apart post elements extend in a plane generally parallel to the plane of the selected planar face of the partition.

Claim 35 (currently amended): ~~The apparatus of claim 30,~~ An apparatus for filtering a natural gas stream, the apparatus comprising:

a closed vessel having a length and an initially open interior;

a partition disposed within the vessel interior, the partition having a planar inner and planar outer side, respectively, dividing the vessel interior into a first stage and a second stage;

an inlet port in fluid communication with the first stage;

an outlet port in fluid communication with the second stage;

at least one opening in the partition sized to receive a locking end of a tubular filter element for supporting the filter element within the vessel;

a mounting structure located on a selected planar side of the partition, the mounting structure comprising at least one post supported by side flanges so that the post lies in a plane which extends at least partly across the opening in the partition; and

wherein a ~~conventional~~ filter element is retrofitted to be installed within the apparatus, the ~~conventional~~ filter element carrying mounting means for engaging the partition opening of the apparatus.

Claim 36 (original): The apparatus of claim 35, wherein the mounting means is an element attachment rod which is carried by the conventional filter element.

Claim 37 (original): The apparatus of claim 36, wherein the element attachment rod has an engagement end which engages the at least one post supported by the side flanges of the mounting structure of the apparatus.